

### **Speaker's Closing Remarks 2003**

We've done a good job this session. We had 21 new members come in and the very first week that we were here we had something every day. And, you know, I believe that everyone got used to paying more attention that first week because the new members were sitting here paying attention to the folks that we had that were giving them information that week on TennCare. And the A.G. met with us, and the Commissioner of Insurance met with us. So, I think that we've had an extremely good year. We did what we said we would do. When we arrived here in January, if you remember, I said that this year that I thought we needed to do our business, balance the budget with no new taxes, and go home. Ladies and gentlemen, that's exactly what we're doing. And I want to commend the Governor and his staff for presenting us a budget that we could work from to accomplish just that. We did balance the budget with no new taxes, and we did it by having to make some cuts. And a lot of those cuts were painful. A lot of them, we dealt with people's lives. And, you know I talked about that last year that we're dealing with people's lives. And we are. A lot of different agencies and our local governments have pitched in. Everybody has to share some of the pain. But we've done a good job with what we had. When you're talking about no new revenue and you've got to cut 9%, it's tough. The Governor had the most open meetings to go over the budget that I presume that there's ever been. All of us except the new ones got pretty familiar with the budget for the last three years. I imagine that the Tennessee Legislature knew more about the

budget process than most any legislature in the country after we got through with what we were doing.

Again, I want to commend the lottery conferees for the good job they did. I think they were outstanding. They spent many hours working, and just did a fine job. We've accomplished a number of things this year. We came here knowing the lottery and the budget were going to be the big items we had to deal with. And we dealt with them. And, again, I can't say enough about the Governor and his staff. The Governor gave us that budget and said make it better if you can. And, believe me, I think we did. I'm proud of the way this House has worked on it and worked together in a bipartisan effort. And that's what it takes. We have communicated. I have stayed in touch with the Republican leadership on a daily basis, and we have worked well together. I have enjoyed working with the leadership, both the Republicans and Democrats.

Let me end this just by saying that we don't anticipate any new revenue for next year either, revenue bills. So don't fool yourself. When you come back here in January, we are going to be dealing with just what we dealt with again. We're gonna have to just hope the economy improves enough where things won't be as bad as they might be, as they are now. Hopeful that the economy will improve and that we will be able to do a little more. I'm really, really concerned about what's going to happen to us in higher education. It's just, when we're cutting higher education instead of putting more money in it, we're going the wrong way. We're having to raise tuition; we're going to raise some of these kids out of college to where they can't go. Maybe it's a good time that we are going to kick the

lottery scholarship bill in. We need to continue looking at pre-K. That's the formative years where we need to really, really look at that harder than we have before. We did do good with K-12. We fully funded the BEP and put the 27 odd million dollars in for the teacher pay equity to start that going again.

I want to commend you for the work you've done and hope that all of you have a nice, restful summer and fall and when we get back here in January we're all ready to work together again. I do commend you, and I thank you.